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12 November 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: 12 November Meeting of the "Indochina Steering Group"

25X1A 1. [redacted] reported on a proposal from Vientiane to use some seven Meo battalions to harass Ban Ban east of the Plaine of Jarres. The idea would be to use these forces to move in on the town, destroy facilities, and then withdraw. Apparently too, such a move would cause Communist forces on the PDJ to withdraw to the east to face the threat. During the operation, [redacted] in effect would be defending Long Thien. Ambassador Godley is in favor of the idea. [redacted] said he thinks this grew out of a conversation between Vang Pao and the Director during the Director's recent visit. Vang Pao, [redacted]

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25X6 25X1A [redacted] in an expansive mood, talked about a three-phased operation beginning with taking the high ground on the PDJ, then clearing the PDJ, and later moving on Ban Ban. The DDP and DDCI are in favor of going ahead with the proposal. The FE Division is dragging its feet noting that the last time a move to the east took place, it ended up with a Communist reaction which cost the Agency [redacted] and lots of agony. Inter-agency meetings have been taking place in recent days. It is an issue likely to come before WSAG before long. The hope of the field is that the operation can begin next week (there was no extensive discussion or debate of this subject, but the sentiment around the room was clearly of a questioning nature).

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2. [redacted] reported on his 9 November meeting with Secretary Laird and further discussions about [redacted]. The situation was made a bit more complicated because CINCPAC had taken the position that he can accept the degradation of intelligence caused by a reduction of carrier operations. [redacted] told the Secretary

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this is a decision for the DCI to make, not CINCPAC, and that the DCI cannot accept degradation. Laird said he would straighten this out. Provision of fighter cover for the reconnaissance from Danang is not an ideal solution since the fighters have to be available for B-52 operations. Until this matter is sorted out, OCI is requested to keep book on the status of our coverage so that a current reading of its sufficiency or lack is readily available.

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4. There was a brief discussion of the OER memo concerning Sihanoukville. The Director has asked [redacted] and [redacted] to look this over. [redacted] was to prepare a supplementary annex on intelligence collection and [redacted] is to draft a transmittal letter from the Director to Admiral Anderson. The Director intends to let [redacted] be the one to take the paper up with the White House.

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5. [redacted] reported that the Southeast Asia Order of Battle conference is proceeding in low key; no major issues or problems expected.

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6. [redacted] of ONE raised recent evidence of a growing Communist threat in Cambodia. After a lengthy discussion of this, it was agreed that OCI would look into the possibility of preparing a "systematic" agency memo on this subject.

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Deputy Director of Current Intelligence

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